

The Capture of Fort Ticonderoga

Background of Fort Ticonderoga

In 1755, French settlers in North America began building a military fortification, Fort Carillon, on the western shore of Lake Champlain. Because of its location, which offered access to both Canada and the Hudson River



Valley, the fort saw more fighting during the French and Indian War than any other post. In July 1758, British forces unsuccessfully attacked the fort, suffering heavy casualties. Under the command of General Jeffrey Amherst, the British returned the following year and were able to defeat the French, who destroyed much of Fort Carillon and withdrew to Canada.

With the fort now under their control, the British renamed it Fort Ticonderoga. By April 1775, when hostilities broke out between colonial militiamen and British soldiers at Lexington and Concord in Massachusetts, the British garrison at Fort Ticonderoga numbered barely 50 men.

A Surprise Attack

Fort Ticonderoga was located directly across Lake Champlain from Vermont, where the Green Mountain Boys--a militia organized in 1770 to defend the property rights of local landowners--joined the Revolutionary War effort without hesitation. On the morning of May 10, 1775, fewer than a hundred of these militiamen, under the joint command of their leader, Ethan Allen, and Benedict Arnold of Massachusetts, crossed Lake Champlain at dawn, surprising and capturing the still-sleeping British garrison at Fort Ticonderoga.

As the first rebel victory of the Revolutionary War, the Battle of Fort Ticonderoga served as a morale booster. It also provided key artillery for the Continental Army in that first year of war. Cannons captured at Fort Ticonderoga would be used during the successful Siege of Boston culminating in the Battle of Bunker Hill the following spring.

Name: _____ Section: _____ Date: _____

Because of its location, the fort would also serve as a staging ground for Continental troops before their planned invasion of British-held territory in Canada.

The Revolution & Beyond

Also in 1776, a fleet of small warships under the command of Benedict Arnold fought the Battle of Valcour Island on Lake Champlain. In July 1777, Fort Ticonderoga changed hands again, after British General John Burgoyne managed to place a cannon on Mount Defiance and force Ticonderoga's garrison under General Arthur St. Clair to evacuate. The Redcoats finally abandoned the fort permanently that November, following Burgoyne's surrender at Saratoga.

In the years following the Revolutionary War, no military regiment would occupy Fort Ticonderoga, though at times the fort provided shelter for scouting parties or raiding detachments. In 1816, a New York merchant named William F. Pell began leasing the grounds of the fort. He bought the property in 1820, building a summer home there known as The Pavilion, which in 1840 was converted into a hotel to house a growing numbers of tourists in the area. In 1908, Stephen Pell began a restoration of Fort Ticonderoga; the fort opened to the public as a tourist attraction the following year.

(Taken from the History Channel web site at <http://www.history.com/topics/capture-of-fort-ticonderoga>)

Fort Ticonderoga Questions

- 1) Who built Ft. Ticonderoga, when was it built, and what was its original name?

- 2) Why was Ft. Ticonderoga originally built? _____
- 3) At the time of the Battles of Lexington and Concord, how many British soldiers were stationed in Ft. Ticonderoga? _____
- 4) What was the name of the militia that attacked Ft. Ticonderoga on the morning of May 10, 1775? _____
- 5) What was the name of the two officers who had joint command of that militia?

- 6) Where were cannons taken from Fort Ticonderoga eventually used? _____

- 7) What would Fort Ticonderoga eventually be used as a staging ground for? _____

- 8) When did Fort Ticonderoga open for public tourism? _____